

Railway Housing Association



Residents' Conference is a Huge Success

Railway Housing Association's annual resident involvement conference was a lively day with 50 of our residents attending to find out more about getting involved and decision making.

The conference, which once again took place in the Royal Station Hotel, York, attracted residents from across the UK.

Held on Tuesday 22nd June, the day of the new Government's first budget, residents were encouraged to really look hard at the local services that Railway Housing Association delivers, and how with their help, we can become even more efficient and effective.

Presentations ranged from a talk by resident board member Alan Gay on his experience of getting involved with Railway Housing Association, through

to how the new housing standards have been designed to give residents more empowerment.

It wasn't all work though, as we ended the day with a quiz that everyone took part in.

Railway Housing Association's Chief Executive, Anne Rowlands, said: "It was motivating to see so many residents from the regions where we provide housing really getting to grips with what they need and how they can get involved.

"From being an armchair monitor contributing to surveys, to stepping up and joining the Railway Housing Association board as two of our residents have done, the day was very rewarding and enjoyable at the same time."

Residents Fenwick and Dora Lavender said: "They made us as strangers very welcome newcomers to Railway Housing Association."

**Over the next three pages, we are delighted to chronicle the day through words and pictures.*



Agreeing the Standards on Offer

A presentation on the new standards devised by the Tenant Services Authority was just one of the many highlights of the day.

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is our regulator (the equivalent of Ofsted for schools) and it requires us to meet certain standards. These standards focus on tenant involvement & empowerment, quality of accommodation, lettings & rents, neighbourhood & communities, value for money and governance & financial viability

The TSA also wants us to agree 'local offers' of services with tenants by April next year because the same level of service may not meet the different needs of all tenants. This means that we may agree variations to our service standards based on where you live or your age group, or any other factor. At the conference residents discussed what 'local' meant to them. It was generally agreed that 'local' meant the few streets in the immediate area surrounding their own home.

Residents also discussed what local offers they would like for involving tenants, repairs and maintenance, and management of their estates. They concluded that they would like to see local offers for garden maintenance, the design of communal gardens, car parking, window cleaning, dealing with anti-social behaviour, small home improvements, communicating with residents, the lettable standard of empty homes, tenancy agreements, and service standards specifically for residents of sheltered accommodation.



What happens next?

Local offers

1. We will develop the local offers with focus group members - August 2010
2. We will report back to the Board on the local offers agreed with tenants - September 2010
3. We will report back to tenants and the TSA on how we will deliver the local offers - October 2010
4. We will begin to implement the local offers - 1st April 2011

Business plan

1. We will consult with focus group members on the Business Plan - August 2010
2. We will consult with staff on the Business Plan - September 2010
3. The Board of Trustees will agree the Business Plan - October 2010
4. The Business Plan will be printed and sent to all residents - early 2011

It's Your Business as Well

We were delighted that conference attendees provided their views about Railway Housing Association's Business Plan.

To make it a bit more fun, residents broke up into three groups to play a racetrack game. The game involved residents placing their priorities on paper racehorses, with the aim of reporting back to staff on what were their top priorities.

The results were as follows:

- Car parking
- Improvements to homes, including health & safety
- More consultation on planned maintenance works
- Energy efficiency
- Reduce the number of surveys, letters and other papers sent to residents
- RHA's own gas engineer
- Garden maintenance
- Special service for most vulnerable





Your Thoughts on the Day

We were delighted with the valuable input residents provided at the conference and Railway Housing Association would like to thank everyone who attended for their support and participation.

A selection of comments made on the day were as follows:

George and Anne Mitchell from Breckonbeds Road, Gateshead, said "We spent some time in Natal, South Africa, because of my husband's mining background and coming back to the North East we couldn't find a home.

"Railway Housing Association was recommended to us and they got us a house in Low Fell, where we wanted to live.

"The conference was well organised and informative and not as formal as we expected, in fact it was fun. The serious point is we've been able to make suggestions that would make a positive impact on us and our neighbours."

John and Judith Probert, from Martin Cheeseman Court, York, "We were able to stay in the same area we wanted to thanks to Railway Housing, it's a good area and we have an excellent local bus service. We were proud to be invited to the annual conference and enjoyed getting involved."

Marlene and Shirley Rutherford, twin sisters from Kingston Road, Willerby, Hull, "We got our home through Railway Housing Association in 1998 after our parents had died and we'd

lived with a friend for a number of years. We really didn't want to leave Willerby and waited until our two-bedroom house came along and we were thrilled.

"The conference has been useful to know how we can feedback ideas and to find out what is happening with Railway Housing now and in the future."

Mary Swanston, from Derwentway, Blaydon, said: "We would really like to come back next year to see if everything we have discussed comes to fruition."

Geoffrey Archer, from Auckland Oval, Darlington, said: "It was a very good and informative day, well done Railway Housing Association."